

'BONE' goes to leaner, meaner bomb

Article by 1st Lt. Brooke Davis
Public Affairs

January 7, 2005

1/7/05 – EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. – Successful B-1B Lancer operations in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom using 2,000-pound Joint Direct Attack Munitions showed a growing need to integrate a smaller version of the weapon into the bomber's weapons-carrying capability.

Testers from Edwards answered the decreased firepower need by releasing, for the first time, an inert 500-pound GBU-38 JDAM during a flight at the China Lake Naval Warfare Center, Calif., bombing range while flying Mach .9 at 25,000 feet Dec. 8.

"The B-1 has been the backbone of bombing missions in OIF and OEF, dropping over 35 percent of all 2000-pound JDAMs," said Maj. Hans Miller, 419th Flight Test Squadron B-1B test pilot.

"With the increasing concern over collateral damage, the GBU-38 has grown in demand as the weapon of choice for strike forces. The SPO [Systems Program Office] was able to build testing the GBU-38 into the current software sustainment block test program."

The China Lake GBU-38 release was successful despite 50-knot winds, and the weapon impacted only three feet from the planned coordinates.

The impact of the weapon split the edge of a metal-container target on the ground, explained Major Miller.

The B-1B is loaded with software that allows aircrews to use "smart" weapons like the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile, Joint Standoff Weapon and JDAM.

The mixed load capability is unique to the B-1 - it is the only aircraft that can employ these weapons from the same bomb bay on the same bomb run, said Major Miller.

During the software sustainment block test program, testers perform flight tests to demonstrate new weapon employment capabilities and perform regression testing to verify previous weapon employment capabilities have not been affected by the new software.

It was a matter of efficiency to integrate certifying the B-1B to carry the GBU-38 while testing its other weapons, said Major Miller.



An Edwards B-1B flies in a Dec. 8 sortie. Testers from Edwards successfully dropped for the first time an inert 500-pound GBU-38 Joint Direct Attack Munition at a bombing range at China Lake Naval Warfare Center. (Photo by James Shryne)
([high-resolution image](#))

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Last updated: January 07, 2005

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